

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, October 2, 2016**

✠ ✠ ✠

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 625, 287:5, 626, 288, 566.

Lessons: Genesis 45:1-13, Romans 13:1-6, John 19:23-27.

Sermon Text: Deuteronomy 5:16.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

You may have heard or read a quotation like this somewhere: "The world is passing through troubling times. The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old age. They are impatient of all restraint. They talk as if they alone knew everything and what passes for wisdom with those who are older is foolishness with them." Whether such words were spoken by a newsman 100 years ago or by Socrates 2500 years ago or never spoken at all doesn't matter. Such words speak to a problem we call sin. And it isn't just young people affected by this. Please pay attention as we look at God's commandment,

**THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT**

1. **We dare not despise, dishonor, or provoke to anger the authorities whom God has placed over us, but**
2. **We are to honor, respect and obey them.**

With this commandment God wants us to honor those in authority, especially those in our homes, our churches, our government and places of employment. Listen to the scriptures: ***"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' which is the first commandment with a promise – that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*** Ephesians 6:1-3 (NIV) ***"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith."*** Hebrews 13:7 (NIV) ***"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."*** Hebrews 13:17 (NIV) ***"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right."*** 1 Peter 2:13-14 (NIV)

We must remember why these people have authority over us. God himself has placed them over us as his representatives on earth. God is protecting their callings in life and their honor in the Fourth Commandment. This commandment is really necessary because we are by nature inclined to disregard authority. Paul speaks of those who are ***"disobedient to parents"*** Romans 1:30 (KJV) 2 Timothy 3:2 (KJV). So it is that from early on that children must be taught and trained to honor and obey their parents and superiors. Obedience is the foundation lesson for all their training.

This commandment speaks first of all to children, then to servants, and then to all who are under authority. And which of us is never under some kind of authority?

These parents and masters do not all have the same power and authority. Each has his own sphere. In the home are father and mother and those who may take their place, such as step parents, foster parents and others whom they ask to serve in their place. Their authority reaches farthest, for God even tells us to honor parents when they are old. Parents are not only to feed, clothe and protect their children, but especially they are to ***"bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."*** Ephesians 6:4 (NIV) In all this they are acting as God's representatives, because it is through them that God himself does these things for us.

In the state God has placed the civil government over us, and its domain is the relationship of the citizens to each other, with the goal that all may live together in peace and security. It has the right to enact and to enforce laws, to punish evildoers, and to levy taxes for its support. These governing authorities God has established for our good.

In the church God has placed pastors and teachers, such as Sunday School teachers, over us and our children. In the name of the congregation they cooperate with the parents in the Christian education of their children. And because it is God's will that such teachers are ministers of God for our good, we should honor, love, and obey them.

In addition, our employers have authority relating to our employment and the work which we are to do for them. To them, too, we should give willing and faithful service.

What does God forbid? We sin against this commandment when we do not show the proper respect or dishonor any of these people, or make them angry by disobedience, ungratefulness, or other sins.

God forbids us to despise, disobey, dishonor, or anger our parents or others in authority. We despise any of them when we do not look up to them as God's representatives, but look down on them, think little of them, speak disrespectfully of them, mock and ridicule them, and are ashamed of them.

We provoke them to anger when we give them backtalk, disobey, resist them, rebel against them and grieve them by doing evil, or leading a wicked life.

God wants his representatives to patiently rebuke and instruct those who sin against this commandment, to reprimand and to punish them when necessary. But such punishment can be a blessing, because it can prevent a person from falling under God's terrible judgment. Though we may possibly escape the immediate punishment of parents and others, we shall not escape the punishment of God, which may catch up with us later in life and absolutely will catch up with us on judgment day. The government has the right to judge and inflict punishment, even the death penalty.

We have spoken so far mostly about what God forbids. What does God require of us? We are to honor, that is, to regard them as God's representatives. To "honor" is more than to love. It includes regarding them respectfully as God's representatives.

We are especially to honor parents also when they grow old, and not abandon them to be cared for by someone else, such as leaving it to the government to care for them. Many epistles of the New Testament have references to providing for the elderly among us.

We are to serve by gladly doing for them what we can. Scripture says ***"Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old."*** Proverbs 23:22 (NIV) We read in 1 Timothy: ***"But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God."*** 1 Timothy 5:4 (NIV) We have many examples in Scripture of children providing for parents, starting in Genesis where, for example, Joseph provided for his father. Genesis 47:11-12 Solomon honored his mother, 1 Kings 2:19 Elisha honored his teacher. 2 Kings 2:12 Even while he was on the cross Jesus provided for his mother. John 19:26.

We are to look upon father and mother and all superiors as God's representatives, love them, pray for them, and willingly serve and obey them.

Also as you heard in our epistle lesson, the government is called ***"God's servant to do you good."*** Romans 13:4 (NIV) and we should ***"Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor."*** Romans 13:7 (NIV) We have a duty to country to love it, obey its laws, assist its officials in keeping law and order, and promote its general welfare. Jesus himself said ***"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."*** Matthew 22:21 (NIV) Even in adversity Jeremiah said ***"seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."*** Jeremiah 29:7 (NIV)

We are to serve our parents and other superiors by gladly doing for them what we can.

We must remember the blessings God gives us through his representatives. Through his representatives in our churches, God gives us the blessing of instruction in his saving Word. All these people care for our souls. Through his representatives in our government, God gives us the blessing of law and order. All these people

have the responsibility of caring for our bodies and life. And especially God calls attention to our parents because through them he gives us many blessings: our daily needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter; instruction in his Word; guidance for life, and loving concern. They care for both our bodily and spiritual welfare.

Did you notice this is the first commandment with a promise? **“Honor your father and mother” – which is the first commandment with a promise – that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.**” Ephesians 6:2-3 (NIV) With this promise God impresses upon us the importance and benefit of honoring our parents and superiors and urges us to obey this Commandment willingly.

We must never forget how much our parents did for us when we were young and helpless infants, and what they are still doing for us. Therefore we should repay them with willing obedience, not wait until we are told what to do, or forced to do it by threats and punishments, but of our own accord we should do good to them, even though it may inconvenience us. Especially when our parents are sick, old, and feeble, and cannot help themselves very well, we should by willing service repay what they have done for us.

Children, subjects, and servants may ask and petition their parents and masters, but have no right to command them. This right God has given to those whom he has placed over us, yet they may not demand anything that is contrary to God's will. This is the one exception to obedience to parents and others in authority: **“We must obey God rather than men!”** Acts 5:29 (NIV) None of these parents or masters has the right and power to demand anything of us that is contrary to the Word of God.

We should obey our parents gladly and do without grumbling, to the best of our ability, what they ask of us. Likewise should the citizens of a country obey the laws of their government not only for fear of punishment but **“for conscience sake”**. Romans 13:5 (KJV) Christians should be law-abiding citizens.

Servants should be obedient to their masters **“not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.”** Ephesians 6:6 (NIV) No matter what he is told to do, a Christian will not loaf on the job, but render faithful service to his employer. In school, children should obey their teachers, both in learning their lessons and in general behavior. The lesson of obedience, well learned and practiced in youth, will carry over into later life. We are to love and esteem our parents and superiors as precious gifts of God.

Of all people on earth our parents are our greatest friends and love us. Through them God gave us life and bestowed great blessings upon us. They are concerned about our welfare, and so their direction and advice proceed from an unselfish motive.

How short we have fallen of what God asks of us!

As God will surely punish those children who despise and disobey their parents, so will he most certainly bless them in their lives if they keep this commandment. Such blessings may be a long life, and things may go well with them in their lives. God does not owe us these blessings, but by grace he promises them to make us more willing to keep this Commandment.

This commandment, too, serves as a mirror for us, for we have disobeyed this commandment and continue to disobey daily – dishonoring parents and those in government especially, but all in authority, don't we!

But we have the joy that Jesus saved us by keeping the Fourth Commandment perfectly for us, and by then dying as a sacrifice for all our sins. As a guide, this commandment then, shows us that God wants us to thank him for his goodness by honoring, serving, and obeying his representatives.

May we always remember this commandment as we pray for parents, leaders in the church, and government as we go about our daily lives. Amen.